Fact Sheet

EPA Region 7

Le Mars Coal Gas Superfund Site
Le Mars, Iowa April 2002

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is formulating a cleanup remedy for ground water and soil contamination at the
Le Mars Coal Gas Superfund site in Le Mars, Iowa. The first steps in the clean up process is to:

- Identify those homes near the site where ground water is moving underneath the homes.
- Sample soil in yards and also sample air in homes for contamination from the site.
- Monitor ground water to track migration or movement of concentrations of site generated contaminants.

The public is invited to the information session to learn more about the upcoming cleanup options on Tuesday, May 7, 2002, at the Public Library from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Representatives from EPA, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa Department of Health will be available to answer questions regarding the ground water monitoring and sampling that will take place in the homes.

Information Session
Open to the Le Mars Community

EPA will hold an informal information session on the Le Mars Coal Gas Superfund site on:

Tuesday, May 7, 2002
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Public Library
46 First Street, S.W.
Le Mars, Iowa

Representatives from EPA, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Iowa Department of Health will be available to answer questions one-on-one about the sampling that will take place in the community.

BACKGROUND

The Le Mars Coal Gas site (Former Manufacturing Gas Plant) is located at 331 1st Street N.E, Le Mars, Plymouth County, Iowa. The site is situated on the northwest corner of the intersection of 4th Avenue N.E. and 1st Street N.E. The total area of the Le Mars Coal Gas site property is 1.6 acres. Currently, the site is the location of the Le Mars Street Department and consists of an office and maintenance shop building, two additional storage buildings, and a shed. The property is currently

owned by the city of Le Mars. Previous owners include the Le Mars Gas Company, Iowa Public Service Company, and private parties.

Previous sampling activities have taken place on the site over a period of years, and the results of the investigations revealed that the major types of waste and by-products associated with the site are: PAHs (emissions from the incomplete burning of fossil fuels, and emissions from coal and gas works); BTEX compounds (light aromatics usually found in coal tar such as benzene, ethyl benzene, toluene, and xylenes, all of which are persistent and mobile in the subsurface of the site); and Cyanide (colorless gas with a faint, bitter, and almond-like odor).

Phase one of the investigation consisted of soil and shallow ground water sampling to verify the presence of hazardous substances and their concentrations. Phase two included the installation of 12 wells to monitor for contaminants in ground water. Surface soil and sediment analytical results revealed a release of contaminants by way of the surface water pathway, and a potential exposure risk for on-site workers and nearby residents. Elevated levels of PAHs and cyanide were identified at levels above health-based benchmarks. Based on analytical data, it appears that contamination has migrated off-site in the shallow aquifer approximately 2,700 feet northwest of the site location, with the potential to travel to the marginal aquitards into the
Le Mars municipal water supply. A human health risk may also exist for individuals that fish in Willow Creek.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

EPA's next steps will be to collect groundwater samples from the 12 existing monitoring wells and 2 municipal wells to assess current levels of contamination; collect indoor air samples from residences overlying areas of the greatest groundwater contamination to determine whether volatile organic compounds in the groundwater are evaporating and migrating into the overlying structures; collect soil gas samples near the residences where indoor air samples are collected; and collect surface soil samples from two residential properties immediately south of the site to determine the extent that site-related contaminants have migrated off site.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions about this fact sheet or need additional information, please contact:

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